Spring Fisheries Survey Summary
Lake Hayward, Sawyer County, 2013

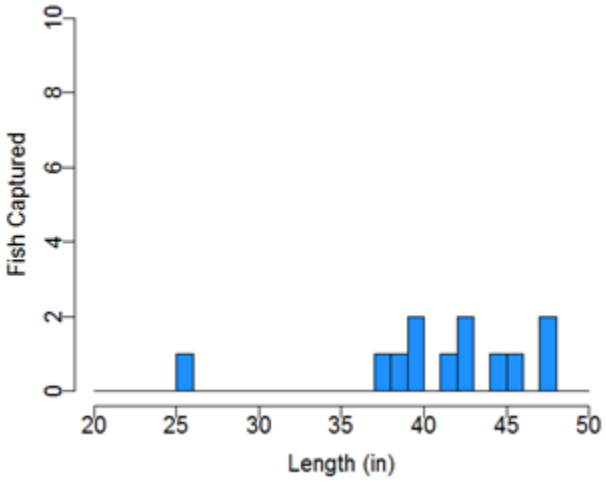
The Hayward DNR Fisheries Management Team conducted a fyke netting survey on Lake Hayward on May 2, 2013 to assess the muskellunge, northern pike, and walleye populations. Eight nets were set overnight for one night which resulted in eight total net-nights of effort. Quality, preferred, and memorable sizes referenced in this summary are based on standard proportions of world record lengths developed for each species by the American Fisheries Society.

Habitat Conditions

Lake Hayward is a 247-acre impoundment at the lower end of the cold-water reach of the Namekagon River, which is part of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. This shallow flowage has relatively clear water and mostly sand or muck substrate that allows aquatic plants to cover a large proportion of lake bottom. This environment allows the water to warm sufficiently to keep upstream brown trout from moving downstream into the lake. Water level is maintained at a relatively stable elevation by controlled releases at the dam owned and operated by Xcel Energy. Migratory sport fish are known to pass downstream through the dam. The shoreline is largely surrounded by residential dwellings within the city limits of Hayward, and there is good public boat access near the swimming beach on the southeast corner of the lake.

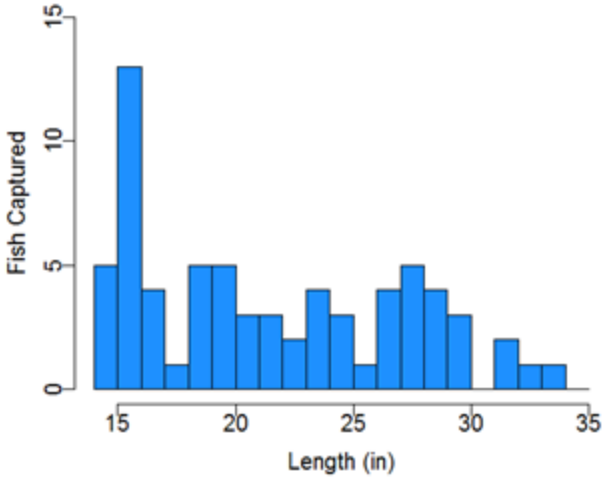
Muskellunge

Captured 1.5 per net-night ≥ 20 inches	
Quality Size ≥ 30"	92%
Memorable Size ≥ 42"	50%



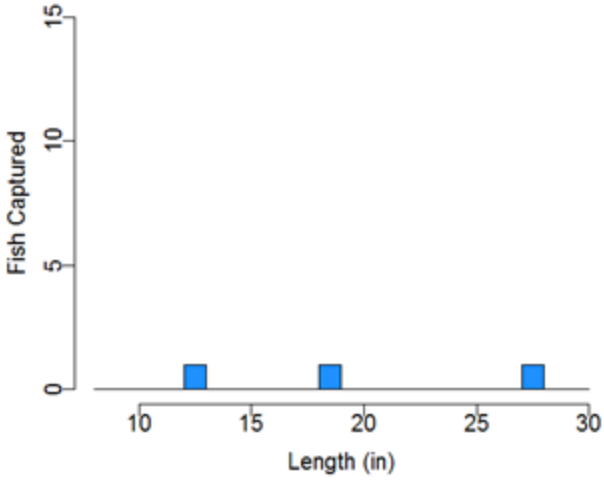
Northern Pike

Captured 9 per net-night ≥ 14 inches	
Quality Size ≥ 21"	48%
Preferred Size ≥ 28"	16%



Walleye

Captured 0.4 per net-night ≥ 10 inches	
Quality Size ≥ 15"	66%
Preferred Size ≥ 20"	33%



Summary of Results

Despite bizarre weather conditions during this survey (12+ inches of snow) this appears to be a very good sample of the muskellunge and pike populations in Lake Hayward.

The muskellunge population appears to be in very good condition. The catch rate we observed (1.5 per net night) is high for the area, particularly for stocked lakes. Size structure was also excellent with many fish over 40 inches and some approaching 50 inches. Lake Hayward has a diverse and abundant forage base that includes species of sucker and redhorse that move between the lake and the Namekagon River. Natural reproduction of muskellunge in Lake Hayward seems possible based on the variety of spawning habitat, but we have no evidence of survival of naturally produced fish. Periodic stocking should maintain this muskellunge fishery. Emigration of some muskellunge over the dam is believed to happen, but this does not seem to be limiting our ability to maintain a fishable population in the lake.

Northern pike were captured at a moderate rate, and this well-balanced population contained a higher proportion of preferred-size fish than any other lake in Sawyer County. Similar to muskellunge, northern pike probably benefit from the abundance of sucker and redhorse forage in Lake Hayward.

Three walleyes were captured in eight fyke nets. We suspect that many walleyes had moved upstream to spawn and therefor were not in the lake to be captured by our nets. Still, the Lake Hayward walleye population is low in number and should provide, at most, a “bonus” fishery. This low-density population is largely sustained through stocking. Many stocked walleyes migrate downstream through the dam, which helps to sustain a walleye fishery in the Namekagon River between Lake Hayward and the Trego Flowage. Stocking strategy in the future will shift from small fingerlings to large fingerlings which exhibit better survival in systems with largemouth bass.

Volunteer Becky Slattery with a nice Lake Hayward musky

Survey Data Collected and Analyzed By: Max Wolter, Russ Warwick, and Scott Braden
Special thanks to volunteer Becky Slattery.
Report By: Max Wolter, Fisheries Biologist, Sawyer County, June 2013
Edited and Approved By: Dave Neuswanger, Fisheries Supervisor, Hayward Field Unit, 1/29/14